EDUCATION! EDUCATION! EDUCATION?

ORGANISE! SOLIDARITY WITH CÁDIZ SHIPYARD WORKERS

BELFAST MAY DAY 2025

BLACK STAR

MAY DAY 2025

WORKERS AGAINST CAPITALISM

It was back to the streets here in the North on May Day at rallies in Belfast and Derry (above), when we marched out again to remember our dead and fight for the living. In a world pulverised by war, genocide, racism and capitalism, anarchists here and elsewhere across the globe gathered sometimes in two and threes, sometimes in dozens, and sometimes in our hundreds and thousands for what the Dublin-born, Matt Kavanagh (1876-1954) said was 'the only thing worth fighting for' - Anarchism. As usual, we heard speeches, some good and some bad, calling for an end to class exploitation, war and the genocidal assault on Palestinians, calls for solidarity with workers' struggles here and across the world, as well as appeals for hope in the midst of such widespread hopelessness. Empowerment, however, can only come about through struggle and the sense of helplessness many of our class feel at this moment can be transformed by standing up to bullies, whether in our workplace, our communities or the wider world. There are more of us than there are of them, and we're coming for you — a las barricadas, compas!

EDUCATION! EDUCATION! EDUCATION?

Local news here recently focused on a 'deal' struck between the lecturers' union, the University and College Union (UCU) and further education college bosses on pay. They are to receive 5.5% for last year and 3% for next year, something which the Sinn Féin Minister of Finance, Caoimhe Archibald trumpeted as yet another success for public sector pay negotiations. Just a matters of weeks ago, the unions were saying this was completely unacceptable and put college lecturers behind school teachers by over £2,000 a year. However, like teachers whose unions called it quits on further strikes last month and accepted 5.5% (actually a 1.4% rise given inflation is 4.1%), there is little push back against Stormont. That, of course, is part of a local dynamic here about support for power-sharing, sympathy for Stormont budgetary problems and essentially conspiring with government to manage these annual pay settlements.

The university lecturers were given 2.5% last year and have been offered 1.4% this year in a climate across the UK in which the sector is facing an estimated 10,000 job losses due to widespread cuts, the continuing impact of Brexit, and the ever-tightening immigration laws that affect the numbers of international students coming to British universities. The response of universities here has been to appeal for a rise in tuition fees. The five universities and university colleges jointly, and obviously unilaterally, requested an extra £1,000 be added to the current fees here, which Stormont has ruled out (at least for now), in line with the students' union, the NUS-USI in Northern Ireland. UCU also opposed the fees' hike and with the two main university bosses here taking home £263,000 and £330,000 (take your pic on which is Ulster University and which is Queen's University), they're not exactly as strapped for cash as they claim. The idea of fees generally as the answer to university funding either in the North or over the border fails absolutely to look at what it has done to students in England, where average student debt at the end of three years stands at over £50,000.

At the other end of the education sector, we have the classroom assistants and other workers, whom Unite have recently said still face temporary contracts and casualised employment, despite up to four years in the job. Well over 2,000, mainly low-paid women workers, are still waiting on some hint of a proper job with at least a bit of security. In the meantime, recruitment agencies like Vanrath, owned by a multi-millionaire former car salesman turned property tycoon, continue to offer minimum wage and casualised employment contracts to probably the most marginal section of the education workforce.

As an industry, education has undergone a tremendous range of challenges in recent years and pay has generally fallen in the public sector, though there is a small private sector often ignored, that continues to thrive here. Alongside the likes of Campbell College and Belfast Royal Academy, there are also the independent Christian schools, all with their own exorbitant fees and hiring practices, though they also receive funding from Stormont through the Education Authority to pay for classroom assistants in workplaces where the disparity between the better and worse paid is very stark.

Education workers are represented by a range of trade unions and professional bodies, with UCU in the universities and colleges, though a lot of ancillary staff there are represented by Unite and Unison. UCU is a typically bourgeois trade union that famously threatened all-out strikes across the sector last year before just as infamously stepping back and managing a strategic climb-down amidst a threatened loss of members, terrified for their 'careers', and the abandonment of national pay bargaining. More recently, they have been fighting their own employees who have taken cases against the union for bullying and harassment. Much cowed this year, with a renewed mandate for its 'left-wing' leadership on the National Executive, the UCU looks likely to keep its head down whilst taking every opportunity to talk about an imminent 'fightback'.

The teaching unions here - represented by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) for the Taigs and the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) for the Prods, alongside the old National Union of Teachers, now the National Education Union (NEU), and NASUWT (hold your breath—the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers). Reflecting the sectarian segregated nature of the education system here, these are also extremely cautious organisations famous in recent years for their central role in pushing for the re-establishment of Stormont. Almost all of them have signed up to barely above inflation pay increases and reached agreements one by one with the employers and the state.

Finally, classroom assistants, general assistants, admin staff, cooks, cleaners and janitors are all represented by the larger public service unions like Unite, Unison, and Nipsa.

This swathe of trade unions across the education sector are essentially all looking for the same thing, a negotiated settlement with employers on pay and conditions. Their views on education's role in society, if they're ever voiced, are rarely a challenge to the status quo. But what is the point of education workers, or any group of workers, organising together? If it isn't (like education itself should be), to change society for the better, then where's the sense in just trundling on with the same old battles when there's a war to be won. That can only be done by all education workers organised together in, dare we say it, one big union.

17th MAY: DEMONSTRATION. DEMONSTRATION. DEMONSTRATION.

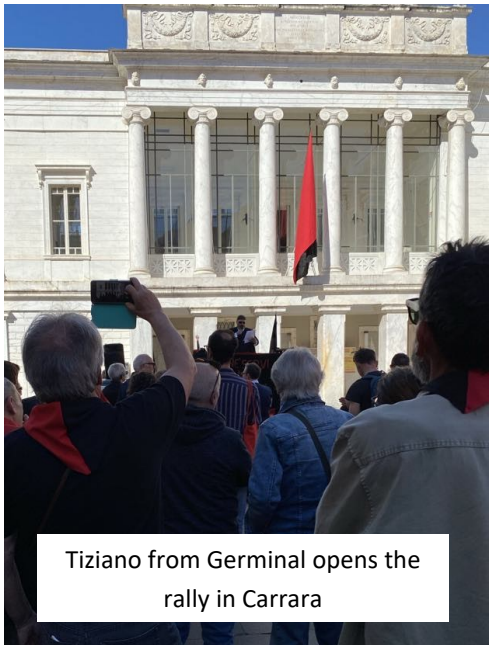
As the genocide in Gaza intensified, the backlash against Trans people continues, Stormont refuses to budge on recent attacks and the far-right seek to capitalise on the reactionary agendas of the establishment media and politicians Belfast got 3 demos in one day. Different groups organised demonstrations in solidarity with those being slaughtered in Gaza, in support of Trans rights and in opposition to organised fascists seeking to peddle more hatred in our city. Anarchists and members of Organise! attended all three demos.

Saturday 17th of May saw the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign Nakba anniversary march against ongoing genocide bring thousands onto the streets. This was followed an impressive show of solidarity for trans people as the march for trans rights, organised by ROSA, saw 3,000 make their way from Writers' Square to city hall and effectively merge with the United Against Racism organised counter demo to the far right. The far right were again massively outnumbered, if anything even more so than usual.

How far are these far right nationalists and racists from Starmer's claim that Britian is "becoming an island of strangers", that immigration has done "incalculable" damage? North and South politicians push the blame for the excesses of rampant capitalism on other working class people. Migrant workers are subject to punitive work practices and deliberately insecure and racist employment and visa conditions that undermines the strength of the working class as a whole. Not content with that politicians are scapegoating immigrants for the lack of social housing, high rents and soaring prices that continue to outstrip wages. This is the racist rhetoric pushed by our ruling class and repeated by fascists. Wedge issues, like the deliberately promoted 'outrage' over Trans people's very existence are used to divide us further while oppressive legislation is enacted and upheld. While profit driven militarism and expansion by the state of Israel (and other states, direct or complicit, that we are generally paying less attention to) sees deaths mounting daily the far right offer up division, working, wittingly or not, to the agenda of the billionaires and millionaires profiting from the increased misery of all of us.

Impressive numbers turned out in Belfast against oppression and genocide. We still need to reflect and assess what meaningful resistance should look like in the face of what is fundamentally a capitalist onslaught. An onslaught that not only puts oppressed groups in greater danger, rolling back on rights they and the working class as a whole won through many years of struggle but which is dividing us at the same time as they destroy the world we live on.

Anarchist May Day in Carrara



Tiziano from Germinal opens the rally in Carrara

May Day in Italy comes hot on the heels of Liberation Day, 25th April, also known as the Anniversary of Resistance. This perhaps explains why anti-fascism is so central to the narrative of anarchism in Italy and why anti-fascism was stressed again and again in the speeches given by the FAI-istas, and others, addressing the assembled anarchists at the beginning of their annual May Day rally, march and commemoration in Carrara.

While official histories tell that Carrara was liberated by Allied Forces with 'strong support' from local partisans it was liberated from fascism by anarchist partisans on the 11th of April - in advance of any of the Allied Forces arriving. The liberated town hall of the city was occupied by the anarchists and, apart from one short-lived interruption, has remained the headquarters of the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana* (FAI) ever since its foundation in 1945.

That interruption, as the story goes, was of course courtesy of the arrival of US forces long after the Nazis had been sent packing. They temporarily pushed the anarchists out of the former town hall and billeted there. A subsequent assault on their commanding officer in the local market saw them pack up and return the building to the anarchists.

The anarchist heritage goes back much further than the war however and it is still very much alive in the streets of Carrara. The rally began to assemble just before 10am as hundreds thronged the small Piazza de Andre to listen to speeches. From the 1894 'Lunigiana Revolt' to 1912 when anarcho-syndicalist quarry workers won a 6 hour day - including traveling time - anarchism has been in the hearts of the workers of Carrara for a long time.

The small stage in Piazza de Andre was decorated with a black flag on which the words "Neither Servants Nor Masters". The concern with fascism was not entirely informed by history, it was made all the more pressing given recent global developments and not least increasing authoritarianism and militarism.

From the Germinal group Tiziano reiterated that May Day is not a celebration - it is a day to reaffirm the will to fight for workers' rights. A fight against the blackmail of employment, against deaths at work. Against Capitalism. The need for opposition to growing militarisation, to European rearmament and for an internationalist anti-militarism was proclaimed.

Serena and Chiara of *Non Una di Meno* in Massa-Carrara focused on the recognition of the work that falls mostly on women, paid and unpaid care work. Sara, of *Freedom Flotilla*, talked about the situation in Palestine and the how it has become a testing ground, a laboratory, for new weapons, drones, systems of repression and control, of artificial intelligence systems to target the objectives useful not only to Israel but for the ultimate resale of the weapons and technologies "tested" on the Palestinian people.

The procession through the streets and piazza's of anarchist Carrara gets under way

Serena and Chiara of *Non Una di Meno* Massa-Carrara

Federico, of the *Reggio Emilia Anarchist Federation*, reiterated how current events demonstrate that some elements of libertarian resistance and anti-fascism are still dramatically on the agenda. How partisans did not choose resistance out of patriotism, but for an idea of a society that is still far away. Remembering the 80th anniversary of the Federation he warned about fascism and the many daily attitudes that pave the way for fascism: xenophobia, homophobia, patriarchy, all expressions of a mentality that is based on the oppression of others. In the face of wars, the only position anarchists can take is in support of those who object and desert, supporting internationalism and opposition to borders.

Make no mistake, class remains central to the anarchist struggle, but - as clear from the speeches as it was from the applause - the anarchists gathered in Carrara, like anarchists everywhere, are not blind to the multiple oppressions facing people all over the world.

The beginning of the procession, which wandered its way past many of the anarchist circolo's, offices, and landmarks of the old town was held in silence. Just a week beforehand quarry worker Paolo Lambruschi joined the litany of workers killed in accidents at work in the Carrara quarries - and a bigger litany of workers killed worldwide in the incessant quest for profits. In his honour, and in honour of all our other working class martyrs the start of the procession was to be held in silence

for the first time in its 80 years - until the laying of wreaths at plaque to martyred workers.

On reaching Piazza Antonio Gramsci the mass of humanity that had squeezed through narrow streets and wider squares became visible as up to 3000 people filled the park. After the laying of wreaths for martyred workers and at the monument to anarcho-syndicalist and founder member of the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USI) Alberto Meschi the silence was broken with song.

Song were sung along the remainder of the procession particularly on reaching the

Piazza Sacco e Vanzetti. From there we made our way back down and the procession concluded at the FAI headquarters - the townhall liberated from fascism by anarchists 81 years ago.

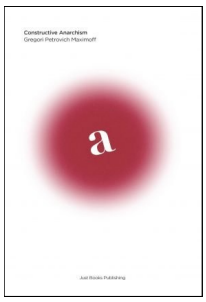
Comrades of Organise! friends of the IWA were moved and proud to stand with anarchists in Carrara as they rededicated themselves to the struggle for the poor and oppressed of the world.

Back in Ireland we hope to bring some of the emotion, energy and commitment to bear in confronting the exploitation and multiple oppressions faced by the working class. We will do so as anarcho-syndicalists struggling for a free and equal world. A world in which there is no place for racism, patriotism or nationalism, nor is their any place in our opposition to colonialism, imperialism and war for any credence to be leant to the militarism and statist ideology of national liberation movements. In confronting patriarchy we have no truck with TERFS nor with corporate or liberal feminisms that seek 'equality' in a system to which inequality is fundamental and intrinsic.

Anarchism is an ideal of love. For a renewed and free humanity - an ideal that is more pressing by the hour. Join us.

Just Books Publishing

Just Books Publishing, set up by the Just Books Collective, has so far published its first two titles.



The first is a reprint of Gregori Maximoff's *Constructive Anarchism*, to mark the 100th year of existence of the International Workers Association (IWA) the Anarcho-Syndicalist international founded in Berlin in 1922.

isbn 9781739723705

£7.99

The second title, now with a new cover, is Nick Heath's *The Idea. Anarchist Communism: Past, Present and Future* - a welcome and new comprehensive work on anarchist communism, this book seeks to rehabilitate the current of anarchist-communism. To make it better known and understood.

...a good substantial book, and much needed. Lucidly written, it provides a rich brew of engaging discussions of the 'Idea' (anarchist communism as a political philosophy), interesting vignettes of many individual anarchists, and a great historical account of the many anarchist communist organisations over the past 150 years... (Brian Morris on *The Idea)*

isbn 9781739723712

£15.00

Available from:

https://organiseanarchistsireland.com/shop/

Cutting Welfare to Fund Warfare

"Don't worry about the crunching underfoot - it's just the corpses of the dead former benefits claimants we killed to finance your wars."

As those on ESA and other benefits continue to be shunted over onto Universal Credit with little allowance or compassion for ability, health or stress the 'Labour' government is pursuing further attacks on the most vulnerable with the blatantly stated aim of funding military spending!

Sickened workers have informed us that there is as yet ignored and unreported daily suffering associated with claims being moved from 'legacy' benefits onto Universal Credit. One worker revealed that they estimate "many hundreds locally" have already fallen through the cracks and have had claims 'lapse' as they were ill equipped to cope with a transition to Universal Credit with "criminally absent" support. Claimants who are bedridden and incapable of visiting Jobs and Benefits Offices have had their claims closed as they struggled to complete daunting and complex processes or failed through no fault of their own to have their identities verified as they moved from legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

On top of this the new series of welfare cuts implemented by the Labour government represents another heartless attack on those in desperate need. The government hopes that its cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) will see up to 1.2 million disabled people lose benefits to the tune of as much as £6,300 EACH per year by the end of the decade. Labour Party research also predicts that by then another 250,000 people - including 50,000 children - will be in relative poverty after paying for increasingly unaffordable housing costs.

The health component of Universal Credit will be cut from £97 a week to £50 a week for new claimants. Further cuts are likely for people under the age of 22 - I mean the young can just shrug off chronic illness and disability. Throw down your crutches and walk child! No wonder Derry wans refer to the local PIP assessment centre as 'Lourdes'!

It is estimated that previous attacks on welfare have caused 50,000 deaths. It seems the Labour government want to double that!

Then there will be the as yet untold thousands that will die as a result of Labour and the rest of Europe's march to rearmament. £2.5 billion extra has already been announced for weapons, militarism and death! And that's just the UK's relatively small proportion of European arms spending.

Mateo Morral Roca and (Failed) Anarchism of the Deed

On the 31st of May 1906 at ten past two in the afternoon, anarchist Mateo Morral Roca threw a bomb from a window on the fourth floor of a guest house on Calle Mayor in Madrid. The bomb, hidden in a bouquet of red roses, was aimed at the royal chariot of Alfonso XIII and Princess Victoria-Eugenia of Battenberg who had just celebrated the royal wedding in the church of Saint Jerome the Royal.

The bomb was headed straight for the royal carriage, but was deflected when it struck the power line for the city's tram' - veering into the crowd watching the procession. The explosion caused at least 28 deaths and nearly 100 injuries, while the royal couple escaped unharmed.

Mateo Morral managed to escape but was arrested on June 2nd in Torrejón de Ardoz and committed suicide. Not satisfied with Morral's suicide the courts framed José Nakens, Francesc Ferrer i Guardia and other anarchists for conspiracy. They were pardoned a year later.

During the Spanish revolution, the name of Calle Mayor was changed to Calle Mateo Morral, in honour of the anarchist.

GADITANA WORKERS' SOLIDARITY

On Wednesday, 21 May, workers at Gaditana de Chorro y Limpieza, a ship-painting firm, in Cádiz blocked the turnstile entrances to the city's shipyard (above), and distributed leaflets which said 'We Gaditana de Chorro workers still haven't been paid. We were promised we'd be paid on the 20th, and our refrigerators are still empty'. The blockade, which was joined by a number of other workers heading into the yard, followed a number of days' of protest at the port entrances. Some of the workers are also our comrades in the CNT-AIT Chiclana, united here in the North even more now as the company is a sub-contractor for the Spanish state shipbuilder, Navantia, the new owners of Harland and Wolff's shipyard.

Gaditana de Chorro y Limpieza is a painting and cleaning company which recently filed for bankruptcy and promised to pay its workers who have had nothing since March from the greedy, lying bastards. The campaign for their just and legal rights will continue until they are given their due and Organise! Anarcho-Syndicalists Ireland stand in support and solidarity with our comrades.

We would appeal as well to the workers at Navantia Belfast to also support their fellow shipyard men in Cádiz in their current struggle. As we have warned here before, it is important for the shipyard workforce in Spain and Northern Ireland to stand together in support of one another through our old traditions of mutual aid and working class solidarity across boundaries both natural and artificial. We will be stronger together if we stand united against the capitalists in the fight for a better world, a world of bread and roses too. International brotherhood and sisterhood is the only means to wrest our power back from the enemies of our common humanity.

Meanwhile... in Ballymena

Things have been quieter here in Ballymena this past wee while. Apart from the odd drugs and firearms cases, an incident where some poor sod walking through Dunclug Park got battered over the heid with a baseball bat and was robbed when oot for his evening dander, there's not been much to report. There's always Ticky, of course, TUV Stormont 'leader', Timothy Gaston, who was up in front of the Assembly standards watchdog for a transphobic rant in a Stormont Committee meeting a while back before unsurprisingly being recently cleared. However, the wee dickhead isnae really worth the detail.

The promise of 300 local jobs did catch my eye with talk of a new factory coming to the toon. Apparently, it's trying to expand from a base in Randalstown specialising in the dupe fragrance market. Apparently (aye, I had to look it up too), a 'dupe' fragrance is one that smells similar to a brand perfume or aftershave but is cheaper. I thought that was the kind of knock-off shit that you could pick up at Nutts' Corner market for a couple of quid rather than the basis for an empire apparently worth millions. Hope they're in a union at least.

Get Involved: Help Build A Working Class Alternative.

ORGANISE!

FRIENDS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION · AMIGOS DE LA ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE LAS Y LOS TRABAJADORES

WWW.ORGANISEANARCHISTSIRELAND.COM

Organise! is an anarcho-syndicalist group in Ireland which is affiliated to the International Worker's Association as 'friends of' section. We take inspiration from the self directed struggles of working-class people, and particularly the history and tradition of struggle epitomised by the IWA - the anarcho-syndicalist international. Our history goes back to the original formation of Organise! by the Ballymena and Antrim Anarchist Groups in 1985.

We are a small, but growing, group of ordinary working class people who are fed up with being fucked about by the profit system, fed up with seeing our communities and workplaces torn apart by racism, patriarchy, nationalism and sectarianism, and sick of a greedy few getting rich off everyone else's backs.

We are actively working to promote solidarity in opposition to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and all other forms of oppression and hierarchy. The way we organise reflects the free society we want to create: one based on voluntary association, democratic participation and self-management.

Our members are workers, claimants, students, migrants, unemployed and other working-class people committed to building a libertarian communist union movement actively opposed to all forms of oppression and exploitation.

We want to improve everyday conditions for ourselves and other working class people, but we also struggle for the revolutionary transformation that can create a free and equal society, one based on mutual aid and co-operation. Sound crazy? Maybe it does, but in an era in which it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism the continuation of the present system is even crazier…

The current system isn't working – ill-health, stress and overwork affect more and more people while others are flung on the dole; for increasing amounts of workers it is precarity, zero hours contracts and the stress of being unable to plan or budget our lives; we live in a world of plentiful resources yet millions starve; some people make vast fortunes just because they own companies, land, property or natural resources, but those of us who create the wealth, work the land and build the properties are left struggling to survive; politicians tell us there's no money – not for wages, benefits or local amenities, but there's always plenty for war; both locally and globally the gap between the richest and the poorest sections of society has never been so great; instead of a war on poverty they've got a war on 'benefit fraud', while the same system that creates war, poverty and environmental destruction stigmatises, imprisons and deports the resultant refugees.

We don't think these things are inevitable or coincidental, we think they are related to capitalism – an economic system defined by wage slavery and the accumulation of profit out of other people's work. So we support all workers against their bosses in demanding higher wages and better conditions. We try to intervene practically to support workers engaged in disputes and are also active in our own workplaces and communities. Not only against exploitation but against the multiple oppressions faced by members of the working class in all our diversity.

But it's not just a question of trying to struggle by in a world of exploitation and oppression; we look to a future where workers control production and society in their own interests. And unlike some people who claim to oppose capitalism, we don't want to be a new set of leaders and we refuse to be led by anyone else. We advocate direct democracy in the workplace and through the commune in our communities – working in federation to ensure that the needs of all are met and that no-one is ever again in a position to oppress or exploit another human being.

If you are interested in these ideas, we'd encourage you to explore our website and consider getting involved.

We currently have members in Belfast, Cork, Derry, Dublin, Lisburn, Monaghan, Newry, Newtownabbey and Portadown and are building the organisation on the basis of active involvement and participation. We have a new Local in Formation in South Ulster. We aren't interested in meaningless 'paper' membership so you can't join by filling in an online form and bunging us a few quid. Every member is an active member.

To talk to us about joining get the ball rolling, check out our website at https://organiseanarchistsireland.com and send an email to: organiseasi@gmail.com